plans for Sakhalin-I as also the various technical, legal and economic information. The results of the new exploration well in 2000 also substantially improved economics of the project. Apart from this, there was also an unsolicited offer by an oil major which necessitated protracted negotiations on the premium to be paid. Overall, the improved profitability of the project was brought into the negotiations and the premium was revised upwards.

(c) In fact, Exxon, an American company, has 30% participating interest and is the Operator in Sakhalin-I project. The reasons for the decision taken by Texaco, another American Company, in 1999 in regard to non-participation in Sakhalin-I Project are not known. Since then the entire economic value of the project has got upgraded.

**Private Sector Gas Pipeline Project**

3168. SHRI ABANI ROY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Oil Companies have expressed strong opposition to the new inter-State gas pipeline proposal floated by one private sector company as reported in the Hindustan Times dated the 27th July, 2001;

(b) if so, whether the involvement of private sector in this particular field is going to have an adverse impact on massive investments made by PSUs for setting up refineries and gas import facilities; and

(c) if so, what is Government's reaction in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI SANTOSH GANGWAR): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir. Import of liquefied natural gas (LNG) is on Open General Licence (OGL) and there are various initiatives including private which propose to import LNG to India for marketing.

(c) Does not arise in view of (b) above.